NEWS RELEASE

Delmarva land grant consortium holds first meeting at DSU

Since the late 19th century, land grant universities have been charged to uphold the three-part mission of research, teaching and outreach education; integrating these three components across the curriculum develops future scientists and offers communities access to research-based information. Today, more than ever, land grant universities are tasked with addressing the critical demands that they were created to meet—affordable education for all; increasing the sustainability, safety and security of America’s food and fiber system; and helping our nation’s partners throughout the world solve similar issues.

Recently in the Delmarva region, 1862 and 1890 land grant universities convened a full-day summit at Delaware State University to discuss ways to collaborate and address these challenges. On Thursday, September 19, faculty, students and administrators from Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, University of Delaware, University of Maryland College Park, University of Maryland Eastern Shore and DSU listened as Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, guest speaker and director for USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture, charged the group with committing collective intellectual and financial resources to solving “wicked problems” of food safety and security, increased energy needs, terrorism, climate change and preservation of natural resources.

Ramaswamy noted that here in the U.S., as is the case internationally, we seek answers to those challenges as the world population explodes, landscapes continue to urbanize and funding for research to address such challenges continues to dry up.

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“Each night, one billion people go to bed hungry, while one billion enjoy excess,” said Ramaswamy. He added, “Children born in the last decade have a shorter life span than their parents,” due to illnesses caused by less active lifestyles that had previously been reserved for people in later years. Land grant universities, he advised, must solve this conundrum.

Ramaswamy praised the consortium as a model for the rest of the country, noting that greater competition for fewer research dollars should compel more land grant universities to follow the Delmarva example.

DE Agriculture Secretary Ed Kee also spoke on the “noble calling” of the universities to remain committed to the land grant mission as all members of the greater Delmarva community will benefit from outcomes of the consortium’s efforts.

The afternoon breakout sessions focused on balancing the preservation of natural resources with sustaining agriculture in the Delmarva region. The consensus of discussion stressed compelling private industry and stakeholders alike to share in addressing challenges, actively recruiting more future scientists into the agriculture and natural resources sciences, and identifying creative ways to fund research and infrastructure. The Summit at DSU was the first of such scheduled meetings of the consortium. For more information, contact Dr. Dyremple Marsh, dean of the College of Agriculture and Related Sciences at DSU: (302) 857-6400.

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